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ABSTRACT

The Oklahoma State University Educational Alliance was formed in 1990 to address multicultural issues in a rural setting and provide a multicultural experience for students. This alliance consisted of Oklahoma State University (OSU) College of Education, Frontier Public Schools, and the Otoe-Missouria Tribe. The OSU College of Education is comprised of six academic units having the primary mission of preparing educational personnel. The Frontier Public School District is a consolidated rural school site providing K-12 schooling for approximately 425 students. Fifty-two percent of the student population is of Native American descent; 48 percent is Anglo-American. The Otoe-Missouria Tribe is a federally recognized tribal government with 1,564 members. The combined resources of the alliance created opportunities for developing and implementing innovative programs. These programs' goals included: (1) professional development in a multicultural environment; (2) enhancing knowledge through field site and on-campus work; (3) fostering cooperation between alliance members; (4) enhancing the learning environment of all Frontier Public School students; and (5) increasing knowledge of college faculty of the Native culture and people. In 1990-91, the Alliance (1) developed a working relationship between the elementary school principal and the tribal child welfare unit; (2) provided OSU students with experience of culturally diverse education by conducting field trips; (3) involved members of the three components of the Alliance in active collaboration; and (4) provided Frontier School teachers an opportunity for graduate study. The OSU College of Education has begun planning additional alliances involving other rural Oklahoma school districts. (LP)

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A RURAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL:

UNIVERSITY-SCHOOL COLLABORATION IN A MULTICULTURAL SETTING

For Presentation at the
National Rural Education Association
Annual Meeting

Jackson, Mississippi
October 14, 1991

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A RURAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL:

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INTRODUCTION

> "Learning is ubiquitous in human experience throughout the life cycle, and humans are very good at it. They are also good at fostering learning through deliberate instruction. Yet in schools, deliberately taught learning seems to be a problem. It is differentially distributed along lines of class, race, ethnicity and language background. (Erickson, 1987, pp. 343-344)

Students in American classrooms, urban, suburban, and rural, reflect the increased ethnic and racial diversity of American society. Yet, as Erickson observes, the culturally diverse nature of American society poses critical issues regarding the method and delivery of education in this nation. The practice of universal schooling through a system of public education has served Anglo Americans well. However, minority students have not fared well in America's schools, either historically or in the contemporary setting. Problematic issues, such as the lack of persistence and poor academic performance of minority students, have led academicians and thoughtful practitioners to question not only how well, but if, American schools address the educational needs of minority youth. McDermott poses the questions, "What is it with them anyway? What is their situation that school seems to go so badly?" (McDermott, 1987, pp. 361-362)

Schools have institutionalized the nineteenth century concept of the nation as a cultural melting pot, embedding that notion within the curriculum for the purpose of producing a singular cultural identity. Reflective of the dominant Anglo society and rooted in a eurocentric tradition, that cultural mold did not, and does not, fit many minority groups, particularly people of color.

Traditionally, schools have been viewed as serving a two fold purpose: to produce a literate citizenry which will support and maintain the nation's economic and democratic institutions. During the industrial and post industrial era, a monocultural approach to schooling provided the predominant Anglo American population with the requisite skills and knowledge base to meet the perceived needs of society. The present reality of a culturally diverse population requires that schools and schooling be viewed through a different perceptual lens.

All students bring their culture to school with them. All students return to their culture when the school day ends. What happens during those intervening hours of the school day? Is each student's cultural background valued and respected? Are the cultures

of some students degraded? Are some students made to feel invisible through the curriculum? The diversity within American society and increased global integration require that all students be multiculturally aware and competent. It has become incumbent upon schools to not only recognize but to also accommodate the cultural heritage that each student brings. The cultural point of reference frames how the student views the world and how the student processes information - in short, how the student learns.

The reality of the diverse student populations served by American schools challenges every aspect of the educational process: curricular content and delivery, school staffing and administration, staff development process, and preparation of future teachers and administrators. The lack of minority educators within Oklahoma's schools is demonstrated through a September, 1991, Oklahoma State Department of Education report. While minority students account for 25.76% of the state's total student population from kindergarten through twelfth grade, minority educators comprise only 7.38% of the state's professional education staff.

Increasingly, public schools and universities are addressing the global nature of educational issues engendered by a culturally diverse student population through cooperative programs. The combined resources create opportunities in which innovative programs can be developed and examined. Specifically, the shared resources of each institution provide the public school with the research and expertise of the university, and provide the university with field site experience of undergraduate and graduate students.

FORMATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL ALLIANCE

In addition to facing the issues of a multicultural schooling, rural educators confront educational realities unique to the rural setting. As an attempt to address multicultural issues in a rural setting and to provide a multicultural experience for Oklahoma State University College of Education students, a proposal was submitted in the spring of 1990 to Dr. John Campbell, President of Oklahoma State University, regarding the creation of a cooperative agreement between Oklahoma State University and a rural school district containing a high percentage of Native Americans. From this proposal an educational alliance was created among three separate entities, Oklahoma State University College of Education, Frontier Public Schools, and the Otoe-Missouria Tribe. Known as the

Oklahoma State University Educational Alliance, this cooperative venture has completed its first year of joint institutional interaction and is currently in its second year of operation.

The members of the Alliance occupy distinct positions within this cooperative program. Oklahoma State University is a land grant institution whose mission is teaching, research, and service. The College of Education relates this mission "to exploration and study of human processes, resources, and development." Frontier Public Schools is a rural public school site consolidated from two school districts: Red Rock and Marland. The Otoe-Missouria Tribe is a Native American organization which represents over 1500 tribal members and governs tribal businesses and services. A more detailed examination of these three separate entities clarifies the position from which each approaches the Alliance.

DESCRIPTION OF ALLIANCE MEMBERS

The Oklahoma State University College of Education is comprised of six academic units having the primary common mission of the preparation of educational personnel.

> Undergraduate and graduate programs in the college prepare students for a variety of roles which require direct personal contact and an understanding of other people. Each year the College awards approximately 300 bachelor's, 150 master's, and 80 doctoral degrees. The College's 120 faculty and staff are engaged in a variety of funded as well as unsponsored research, development, and dissemination activities which support the College's balanced mission of teaching, research, and service. (Oklahoma State University College of Education Faculty Report, September 21, 1991).

Located 30 miles north of Stillwater, Oklahoma, the Frontier Public School District is a consolidated rural school site providing K-12 schooling for approximately 425 students. Fifty-two percent of the students are of Native American descent, while approximately forty-eight percent are Anglo-American. Frontier's comprehensive program offers a pre-school, a lower elementary (K-4), an upper elementary (5-8) and a high school curriculum. The school staff is comprised of four administrators, 38 certified personnel, and 35 support personnel. The district receives state foundation and incentive aid. local

funding (OG&E), and federal funding from JOM, Title V-C, and impact aid. The Frontier district maintains a transportation area of over 256 square miles and serves those students from the Red Rock and Marland communities, as well as the newly added four students from the Sumner community.

The Red Rock community of 321 contains six stores, five churches, and one Bingo Hall. The major industry in the area is the nearby OG&E Energy Plant. Red Rock is located one mile west of Frontier Schools. The Marland community of 250 contains three stores and two churches. The major industry in the area is Conoco Refinery in Ponca City. Marland is located 10 miles north of Frontier Schools. The Sumner community, as Red Rock and Marland, is considered to be primarily an agricultural and livestock community.

The Otoe-Missouria Tribe is a federally recognized tribal government with 1564 members. Over one-half of these members live on or close to the original Otoe-Missouria tribal reservation boundaries. The Tribe operates a convenience store and a bingo hall as tribal businesses and is the primary employer of tribal members. The Otoe-Missouria Tribe has secured funding to establish a Tribal Court. This court will provide the mechanism for enforcing the Otoe-Missouria Law and Order Code. Collections from gross receipts sales tax and tobacco taxes by the recently established Otoe-Missouria Tax Commission will be used to provide governmental services and economic development.

DESCRIPTION OF ALLIANCE

The Oklahoma State University Educational Alliance was created to enhance the educational environments and opportunities of the diverse organizations and populations contained within the cooperative. The project is designed (1) to provide clinical experiences for the OSU College of Education students in a multi-cultural setting, (2) to impact the day-to-day school life of Frontier School students, and (3) to enhance the instructional skills of the Frontier Public Schools Faculty. Participation in all phases of the

Alliance activities has been on a voluntary basis. The goals of the Educational Alliance include:

1. The development of educational professionals who have understandings of potential and alternative teaching/learning processes in a multicultural environment.

2. The enhancement of the knowledge base and instructional community through field site and on-campus course work.

3. The fostering of a positive, cooperative relationship between the Otoe-Missouria Tribe, Frontier School District, Oklahoma State University, and the Red Rock and Marland communities to ensure open communication and cultural understanding.

4. The enhancement of the learning environment of all Frontier Pubic School students.

5. The heightening of the knowledge and awareness of college faculty of the culture and world view of Native American people.

In order to work toward achievement of these primary goals, the three partners in the Educational Alliance have developed and implemented a variety of programs during 1990-91. While each of these programs has included varied levels of involvement of the partners in the Alliance, one of the partners, Oklahoma State University, was assigned primary responsibility for the program. Descriptions of each of these programs and the initiating partner follow.

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

One section of CIED 3430, Clinical Experience for Elementary Education, was provided on-site in the Frontier Public Schools in the fall and spring semesters. A total of 26 students (13 in the fall semester and 13 in the spring semester) completed the clinical experience course at Frontier Public Schools. The program was expanded during the second semester to include middle school classrooms.

The CIED 3430 students were encouraged by the supervising administrator, the elementary principal, and the cooperating teachers to actively participate in the educational

process. The CIED students participated by tutoring Frontier students individually or in small groups, developing and implementing lesson plans, supervising students, and participating in professional meetings.

Four College of Education students completed their student teaching experience at Frontier Public School in elementary special education, secondary science.

A one-half day field site experience was provided at Frontier in February, 1991 for approximately two hundred OSU students enrolled in CIED 2113, Schools in American Society. The OSU students met in a large group for an orientation provided by the Frontier School Superintendent, the Otoe-Missouria tribal chairman, and the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs of the Oklahoma State University College of Education. After a brief tour of the school, the OSU students met in small groups with the elementary, middle, and high school principals, each of whom provided an orientation to each specific level of the educational program. The field site experience concluded with small group meetings between teams of Frontier High School students and OSU students who engaged in an open dialogue about public school education and higher education.

Six College of Education students, designated as Wentz Scholars, were employed to provide tutoring to Frontier Public Schools students. Employment was coordinated by the OSU Financial Aid Office. Coordination of the tutorial program and supervision of the Wentz students was administered by the Frontier High School and Middle Schools principals. The Wentz tutors were provided with an orientation to Native American cultures prior to their entry into the school setting. The orientation was facilitated by OSU Native American faculty members.

A faculty team composed of five College of Education faculty members and one College of Arts and Sciences faculty member designed a master's degree level course, Contemporary Issues in Public Education, and delivered it on-site to the participating Frontier faculty. Twenty of the 36 Frontier School faculty members and the four school

administrators elected to enroll in the class. The Frontier Public Schools Board of Education paid the tuition costs for all Frontier faculty members enrolled in the class.

Selected members of the Educational Alliance administrative team attended the Fall 1990 and Spring 1991 South Central Regional Holmes Group conference in Kansas City and Houston, respectively.

Through the mentoring component of the Educational Alliance, two Native American Frontier High School students were admitted to the OSU Aerospace Summer Academy for the 1991 summer session.

FRONTIER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Prior to the 1990/91 schools year, Frontier had been placed on the Oklahoma State Department of Education's list of "at risk" schools. In order to assist in addressing the low student test scores of previous years, Frontier introduced the Josten's Learning System to its students. This computer-assisted instructional program provided approximately 275 Frontier School students (grades two through eight) with individualized instruction in reading and math. These students also received instruction in keyboarding skills. Utilizing the Compton Encyclopedia program, instruction at the middle school level focused on building research skills.

Frontier Public Schools developed a proposal for funds for acquisition of equipment which is scheduled to provide satellite linkage with other educational agencies.

The Frontier faculty implemented the Early Prevention of School Failure program which identifies each student's learning modality at the pre-school and kindergarten levels. Teaching strategies appropriate for the individual student are subsequently developed and utilized in this program. Parental training and involvement are integral components in the program.

A team of Frontier Public Schools administrators and faculty members received training in Outcome Based Education for the purpose of determining the suitability of

implementation of the program at Frontier. The implications of this program for the district were discussed by members of the Frontier and Oklahoma State University faculties involved in the Contemporary Issues in Public Education course.

As a philanthropic activity, the Oklahoma State University Chapter of the Mortar Board developed a letter exchange with Frontier High School students for the purpose of informing Frontier students about higher education. The Frontier High School English teacher coordinated the activity at the school. Mortar Board, in conjunction with Oklahoma State University Office of High School and College Relations, hosted a group of Frontier High School students for a campus visit and lunch. The Mortar Board members were provided with a Native American cultural seminar facilitated by OSU Native American faculty members.

In January 1991, the partner members co-hosted a reception at the Frontier School site. The reception, attended by the Frontier administration, faculty and school board members, the Otoe-Missouria tribal administration and council members, and the OSU College of Education administration and faculty members, served as a forum for exchanging information and sharing ideas.

OTOE-MISSOURIA TRIBE

The Otoe-Missouria Tribe has recently developed an adolescent health program which provides information, counseling, and recreation for Native American youth. Services from this program are provided to students at the Frontier School site.

The Tribe developed a proposal for a Substance Abuse Prevention Community Partnership Demonstration grant. The OSU College of Education and Frontier Public Schools are cooperating partners within the seven member consortium designated to operate under this proposal.

A cooperative film project was initiated by a library grant received by the Otoe-Missouria Tribe. Under this grant the Educational Alliance produced a film documenting Otoe-Missouria tribal oral tradition. Tribal elders served as the story tellers and Frontier High Schools students conducted and filmed the interviews. The high school social studies teacher coordinated the activity at the school. An Oklahoma State Department Vo-Tech audio specialist employed under contract with the College of Education Extension Office, served as the technical specialist for the project. These individuals provided the students with training in the development of interview questions and interviewing techniques. The students were also provided with instruction in the use of audio and video equipment. Copies of the film will be housed in the tribal archives, the Frontier media center, and the OSU College of Education.

SUMMARY

In its initial year, the Education Alliance has implemented many more activities than the partners anticipated when the Alliance was formed in the Spring of 1990. Overall, 1990-91 was a successful year for the Alliance in terms of:

Providing a greater communication linkage between Frontier Public School and the Otoe-Missouria Tribe. A direct result has been the development of a working relationship between the elementary school principal and the tribal child welfare unit;

Providing OSU students with the opportunity to experience a culturally diverse education setting;

Encouraging the active involvement in the Alliance of Frontier faculty and school board, OSU faculty and the larger OSU community, and the Native American communities;

Providing Frontier faculty members with the opportunity to pursue graduate studies; and

Facilitating open dialogue between tribal members, school personnel, and university personnel.

The creation of so many new programs involves a certain amount of risk taking and trial and error. Such has been true of the Education Alliance. The Alliance members share a commitment to the ideals of transformation and growth through cooperative union. This commitment has led to a willingness to take risks and implement innovative projects. Reflective evaluation has led to the following conclusions:

1. The CIED 2113 field site experience should be enriched by extending it over a ten week period and sending one section of students each week for a full day experience.

2. A fall and spring visit to Oklahoma State University would be beneficial to Frontier High School students.

3. One and two hour module, on-site seminars should be considered in the development of a masters degree program for Frontier faculty.

4. The issue of timely and accurate exchange of information between Alliance members through various forms of communication should be considered.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The experiences of the first year indicated directions for future growth and development of the Educational Alliance. Furthermore, the partners in the Educational Alliance have identified both the need and opportunity for further development of cooperative agreements focusing on:

1. Research and development programs involving partners in the Alliance;

2. Continued and expanded clinical experiences in the school and community;

3. Increased multicultural awareness opportunities for students at the university and public school levels;

4. An expanded and more efficient communication linkage between the tribal communities, public schools and the university;

5. The provision of administrative and school counselor internships in the public schools.

The College of Education has plans to develop additional education alliances involving other Oklahoma school districts located in rural communities in order to better

serve the needs of the OSU Teacher Education students, the students in the selected school districts, and the citizens served by those school districts.

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